

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

A New Plan for the City

The City of Lynchburg Comprehensive Plan presents a vision of what the community will be like in the future and identifies the steps required to move toward that vision. The Plan provides information about the City's current conditions, long-term goals and objectives, and recommendations about a wide range of issues—future land uses, the character of new development, the preservation of historic and natural resources, and the future of transportation and utility systems.

As a long-term guide for the community, the Plan helps City leaders make decisions about the location, scale, and quality of new development; the improvement of neighborhoods and commercial areas; the revitalization of downtown and surrounding historic areas; the extension and upgrade of utilities; and the future of the City's parks, public spaces, and natural areas.

The Plan builds on a long tradition of planning in the City. Since 1934, the year of Lynchburg's first master plan, City decisions regarding land development and annexations, as well as public investments in transportation, public utilities, and parks, have been guided by a plan. Continuing this tradition, the City has completed several plan updates, including complete rewrites in 1977 and 1984.

Planning in Two Phases

The process of preparing this Comprehensive Plan was organized in two phases:

- The first phase focused on data collection and analysis; the review of existing City policies, regulations, and planning practices; and the study of trends—primarily market and population—that are likely to affect the community's growth, preservation, and development over the next 20 years.
- The second phase focused on the articulation and refinement of a long-range vision for the City, the establishment of goals and objectives for each element of the Plan, and the definitions of policies and implementation strategies. This phase also included preparation of a Plan Framework Map, which illustrates general patterns of development and highlights areas where change is encouraged or anticipated, and the Future Land Use Map, which provides more detailed land use recommendations.

Introduction

Phase I of the process began with a series of worksessions, focus groups, and interviews with local stakeholders to gain their perspective on the City's strengths and weaknesses, and the opportunities and threats the City may face over the next two decades. Additional focus groups with neighborhood stakeholders and housing providers (for-profit and not-for-profit) provided additional insight into perceptions of housing and neighborhood issues. Concurrent with the stakeholder outreach, planners studied existing plans and studies; reviewed existing conditions; and consulted with staff from City departments, surrounding localities, and regional and state agencies.

The results of this initial effort are documented in the publication entitled *Planning Context & Preliminary Inventory Report*. The report, available for review at the Department of Community Planning and Development and both City Libraries, includes summaries of the planning team's research, as well as lists of Phase I interview and focus group participants.

Phase II of the process was organized around a series of public visioning and goal-setting workshops, stakeholder worksessions, meetings of the citizen steering committee, and worksessions with the Planning Commission.

Technical planning work during this phase included the development of GIS maps documenting and analyzing existing conditions. Using records from the City's GIS system and data from the City Assessor's office, the team prepared an inventory of existing land uses and maps showing the condition, value, and square footage of residential structures. The data also was used to identify development opportunities by major land use category—commercial, employment, and residential—and assist in the identification of land use conflicts. Market projections were also refined during Phase II. The analysis maps and market projections are available for review in the Department of Community Planning and Development.

A Community-Based, Vision-Driven Process

Community engagement and outreach played central roles in the planning process. To ensure that the Plan addressed the broadest range of community interests, the City sponsored an intensive and multifaceted effort to raise awareness and understanding of planning issues and to encourage people to share their ideas and concerns. The processes included the following:

Citizen Steering Committee

To guide the effort, the Planning Commission appointed a 24-member Citizen Steering Committee (CSC) representing a broad range of interests and over 18 different City neighborhoods. The CSC worked with the Planning Commission, City staff, and consultants to review technical information, explore issues and ideas

Introduction

regarding the City's future, and provide guidance on the Plan's recommendations. The CSC guided preparation of a Vision statement; contributed goals, objectives, and strategies; and assisted in the identification of priorities for the Plan's implementation.



Citizen Steering Committee Meeting, January 2001.

Web Site, Flyers, & Advertisements

To encourage participation in meetings and events and to provide access to planning documents and meeting summaries, the City developed and maintained a special web site, directly accessible from the City's home page, placed flyers in water bills, distributed announcements to civic groups, and placed advertisements in local newspapers.

Stakeholder Interviews & Focus Groups

Throughout Phases I and II, City planners reached out to individuals, groups, and organizations. The City organized interviews with key stakeholders, hosted small group meetings, and made presentations to neighborhood and civic groups. During April and May 2001, small group meetings with staff from various City departments, CSC members, and other stakeholders were held to discuss key elements of the Plan, review preliminary goals, and identify specific objectives for cultural and historic resources, neighborhoods and housing, economic development, parks and recreation, natural resources, transportation and utilities, and public facilities.

Public Workshops: Round One

Two sets of public workshops and a City Forum were held during Phase II to obtain broad-based citizen input for the Plan. The first round of public workshops was held the week of November 13th, 2000, to provide citizens with opportunities to learn about the planning process and share their ideas for the future of the City.

Introduction

The workshops were held at Heritage Elementary School, Lynchburg City Hall and Dunbar Middle School.

Participants discussed issues and assets, then identified actions for the following topics: A City of Strong Neighborhoods, A New Focus on Downtown & the Riverfront, Special Places: Celebrating History and Nature, Guiding Growth & Development, Effective Support Systems, and Partners in Progress. The information shared during the workshops provided the foundation for developing a Vision for the City. Residents identified specific actions that would improve the livability of their neighborhoods, revitalize the downtown, help promote the City's cultural and historic resources, and improve City services and facilities.

City Forum

On July 9, 2001, the Citizen Steering Committee welcomed citizens to a City Forum held at the Court Street United Methodist Church. The forum served as a kickoff for a series of public workshops focused on community character. Edward T. McMahon, Director of the American Greenways Program of The Conservation Fund, gave a presentation entitled "The Dollars & Sense of Preserving Community Character." Mr. McMahon is an attorney, community planner, and author of several articles and books including *Better Models for Development in Virginia*.

The presentation addressed how other communities throughout the country and in the Commonwealth of Virginia were improving and preserving their character. A panel composed of three Citizen Steering Committee members and a representative of the Planning Commission led a discussion about maintaining Lynchburg's unique character. Participants asked questions and made comments on the presentation and discussed ways the City could improve its overall appearance. The forum set the stage for the second series of public workshops.

Public Workshops: Round Two

During the week of July 16-19, 2001, residents gathered at the First Presbyterian Church, Fairview Heights Recreation Center, the Lynchburg Public Library and the Lynchburg Small Business Development Center for a second series of public workshops. The focus of the series was to gain feedback on community character preferences associated with existing and future development within the City—to find out what kind of development the citizens would like to see in Lynchburg in the future.

Community Character Survey

A Community Character Survey was the central feature of the second round of community workshops. Each of the four workshops began with a presentation about the importance of design, followed by a "Community Character Survey" in which participants rated 114 photographs (from Lynchburg and elsewhere) on a scale of negative five (strongly disapprove) to positive five (strongly approve).

Images were organized in three categories: Neighborhoods; Commercial Corridors and Districts; and Streets, Parking & Public Spaces.

The survey lasted approximately 25 minutes. Each evening following the survey, a random sample of surveys was selected and tabulated to determine the average rating of each photograph. The sample procedure provided an instant preliminary analysis of which photographs received the highest and lowest ratings and served as the basis for a group discussion about the images and related planning issues. The results of the survey are summarized in Chapter 6, Design, Character & Quality, and in a report available for review in the Department of Community Planning and Development.

Final Outreach

After completion of the second round of public workshops, the planning team and the Citizen Steering Committee prepared a Draft Plan based on the vision, goals, objectives, and strategies developed earlier and the subsequent public input. The Draft Plan was published and delivered to the CSC in mid-May 2002. At this time, copies were placed in City libraries and posted on the Internet for public review. After final review and recommendation by the CSC, the amended draft was sent to the Planning Commission for review and public hearing. The Planning Commission's public hearing was held on July 10, 2002. The Planning Commission considered the public's comments and adopted and certified its Draft Plan on July 24, 2002. Finally, the City Council held a public hearing on August 13, 2002. After thoughtful deliberation and consideration of public comments, the City Council adopted this Final Lynchburg Comprehensive Plan on September 10, 2002.

Planning Authority

Section 15.2-2223 of the Virginia Code requires all localities in the Commonwealth to prepare and adopt a "comprehensive plan for the physical development of the territory within its jurisdiction." According to Section 15.2-2223, a locality's Planning Commission is charged with the responsibility to prepare and recommend a Plan to the governing body.

According to the Code,

The comprehensive plan shall be made with the purpose of guiding and accomplishing a coordinated, adjusted and harmonious development of the territory which will, in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the inhabitants.

The code further requires in Section 15.2-2230 that, "at least once every five years, the comprehensive plan shall be reviewed by the local planning commission to determine whether it is advisable to amend the plan."

Introduction

Plan Organization

This plan is organized for the convenience of both the general reader and those with questions about detailed recommendations in specific topic areas. For the general reader, the plan includes an Executive Summary, then this Introduction (Chapter 1) and a presentation of the City's Vision and Goals (Chapter 2). Following these opening chapters are the more detailed elements of the plan. Chapter 3 presents data on population change and characteristics, employment information, and economic data to provide the Planning Context. Chapter 4 gives the overall framework for planning in Lynchburg through an illustrative map and text. This Plan Framework Map illustrates the City's general pattern of development and highlights areas where some degree of change is encouraged or anticipated. Following the Plan Framework are the chapters dealing with specific topic areas, referred to as "plan elements," and listed below:

Chapter 5	Citywide Land Use & Development	Chapter 12	Natural Systems
Chapter 6	Design, Character & Quality	Chapter 13	Parks & Recreation
Chapter 7	Economic Development & Redevelopment	Chapter 14	Transportation
Chapter 8	Downtown & Riverfront Master Plan 2000	Chapter 15	Public Utilities
Chapter 9	Commercial & Employment Areas	Chapter 16	Public Facilities
Chapter 10	Neighborhoods & Housing		
Chapter 11	History, Culture, Education & the Arts		

The order in which the Plan elements are presented does not imply any priority or order of importance. It is important for users of the Plan to recognize that all the elements are interrelated.

Each element of the Plan contains a list of long-term goals, the same as those listed in Chapter 2, as well as more detailed objectives and strategies designed to implement the goals. The strategies are the most detailed recommendations of the plan and include specific projects, programs, initiatives, and investments that the City should undertake.

Although each individual strategy is important in achieving the Vision, it is necessary to identify priorities and responsibilities for early implementation. Chapter 17, the final chapter, lists initial actions outlined in a five-year Implementation Program.